non-Muslim Religious Celebrations and Ruling on participataing

Part Two

Definition of imitation.

Imitation (tashabbuh in Arabic) means resembling. If we say that someone imitates someone else, we means that he looks like him and acts like him. Likening a things to something else (tashbeeh) means saying that it is like it. The word tashabbuh has many counterparts in Arabic which carry meanings such as being like, imitating, looking like, following, agreeing with, taking as an example, copying, etc. They all have shades of meaning of their own, but they also overlap with the meaning of tashabbuh. In terms of the terminology of Fiqh, al-Ghuzzi al-Shaafa'i defined tashabbuh as describing a person's attempt to be like the one whom he is imitating, in appearance, characteristics, wqualities and attributes. It implies making an effort to achieve this and deliberately taking action for that purpose.

The ruling on imitating the kuffaar

One of the most important basic principles of our religion is that of al-walaa' wa'l-baraa', loyalty (walaa') to Islam and its people, and diavowal (baraa') of kufr and its people. One of the essential features of this disavowal of kufr and it's people is that the Muslim should be distinct from the people of kufr, and he should feel proud of his religion and of being a Muslim, no matter how strong and advanced and civilized the kuffaar may be, and no matter how weak and backward and divided the Muslims may be. It is not permissible under any circumstances to take the strength of the kuffaar and the weakness of the Muslims as an excuse for imitating and resembling them, as some hypocrites and defeatist Muslims claim. The texts which forbid imitating the kuffaar do not make any distinction between whether Muslims are strong or weak, because the Muslim can be distinct in his religion and be proud of being Muslim even when he is in a weak position.

Allaah calls us to be proud of Islam, and considers this to be the best of speech and the best kind of pride, as He says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And who is better in speech than he who [says: “My Lord is Allah (believes in His Oneness),” and then stands firm (acts upon His Order), and] invites (men) to Allah’s (Islamic Monotheism), and does righteous deeds, and says: “I am one of the Muslims.” [Fussilat 41:33]

Because it is so important for the Muslim to be distinguished from the kaafir, the Muslim is commanded to pray to Allaah at least seventeen times each day to help him to avoid the path of the kaafireen and to guide him to the Straight Path:

“Guide us to the Straight Way. The way of those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace, not (the way) of those who earned Your Anger, nor of those who went astray” [al-Faatihah 1:6-7 – interpretation of the meaning].

There are very many texts in the Qur’aan and Sunnah which forbid us to imitate them, and which clearly state that they are misguided; whoever imitates them, imitates them in their misguidance. Allaah says (interpretation of the meanings);

“Then We have put you (O Muhammad Õáì Çááå Úáíå æÓáã) on a (plain) way of (Our) commandment [like the one which We commanded Our Messengers before you (i.e. legal ways and laws of the Islâmic Monotheism)]. So follow you that (Islâmic Monotheism and its laws), and follow not the desires of those who know not.” [al-Jaathiyah 46:18]

“Were you (O Muhammad Õáì Çááå Úáíå æÓáã) to follow their (vain) desires after the knowledge which has come to you, then you will not have any *Walî* (protector) or *Wâq* (defender) against Allâh” [al-Ra’d 13:37]

“And be not as those who divided and differed among themselves after the clear proofs had come to them” [Aal- ‘Imraan 3:105]

Allaah calls the believers to remember Him with humility and to recite His Verses, then He says (interpretation of the meaning):

“lest they become as those who received the Scripture [the Taurât (Torah) and the Injeel (Gospel)] before (i.e. Jews and Christians), and the term was prolonged for them and so their hearts were hardened? And many of them were *Fâsiqûn* (the rebellious, the disobedient to Allâh)” [al-Hadeed 57:16]

No doubt imitating them is one of the grestes indications that a person has befriended them and loves them, and this contradicts the idea of diavowal [baraa'] of the kufr and its people. Allaah has forbidden the believers to take them as friends, and He has stated that taking them as friends causes a person to become one of them – Allaah forbid. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"O you who believe! Take not the Jews and the Christians as *Auliyâ'* (friends, protectors, helpers), they are but *Auliyâ'* of each other. And if any amongst you takes them (as *Auliyâ'*), then surely, he is one of them" [al-Maa'idah 5:51]

"You (O Muhammad) will not find any people who believe in Allâh and the Last Day, making friendship with those who oppose Allâh and His Messenger (Muhammad), even though they were their fathers or their sons or their brothers or their kindred (people)" [al-Mujaadilah 58:22]

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: "Imitation generates friendship and love, and regarding them as allies in the inside, just as loving them on the inside generates imitating them on the outside."

And he also said, commenting on the aayah from Soorat al-Mujaadilah: "Allaah tells us that there is no (true) believer who takes a kaafir as a friend, for whoever takes a kaafir as friend is not a believer. Imitation on the outside implies that a person loves (the one whom he imitates), and so it is forbidden."

It was reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Whoever imitates a people is one of them."

(Narrated by Abu Dawood, al-Libaas, 1204; Ahmad, 2/05. Shaykh al-Islam classed its isnaad as jayyid in al-Iqtidaa', 1/042. See also al-Fataawaa, 25/133. Al-Haafiz provided corroborating evidence in al-Fath, with a mursal report whose isnaad is hasan (6/89). Al-Suyooti classed it as hasan, and al-Albaani classed it as saheeh in Jamee' al-Saheeh, 5206).

Shaykh al-Islam said: "This hadeeth at the very least implies that it is haraam to imitate them, even if it is only in external appearance, and it implies that the one who imitatest hem is a kaafir, as Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning): 'And if any amongst you takes them (as *Auliyâ'*), then surely, he is one of them' [al-Maa'idah 5:51]." (al-Iqtidaa', 1/732).

Al-San'aani said: "If a person imitates the kaafir in his dress, and believes that by doing so he will be like him, then he is a kaafir. If he does not belive this, then there is a difference of opinion among the fuqahaa' in this case. Some of them say that he is a kaafir, which is

the apparent meaning of the hadeeth; others say that he is not a kaafir, but he should be disciplined.” (Subul al-Salaam, 8/842).

Shaykh al-Islam said: “The reason why the religion of Allaah and its rituals is vanishing, and kufr and sin are prevailing, is because of imitation of the kaafireen, just as the means of preserving all good is by following the ways and laws of the Prophets. “ (al-Iqtidaa’, 1/413).

There is much that could be said about imitation of the kuffaar, but what we have said above is sufficient.

The forms of imitating the kuffaar in their festivals

The various sects and groups of the kuffaar have many kinds of festivals, some of them have a religious basis whilst others have been newly invented. Some of their festivals are like customs and events for which they have invented festivals, such as national holidays and the like. Their festivals may be grouped into different categories as follows:

Firstly:

religious festivals by means of which they seek to draw nearer to Allaah, such as the Epiphany, Easter, Passover, Christmas, etc. They ways in which the Muslims imitate them in these festivals are two:

1. Joining in with them in these festivals, such as when some non-Islamic groups or minorities in Muslim countries celebrate their festivals, and some Muslims join in with them. This happened at the time of Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah and al-Haafiz al-Dhahabi, and it is what is happening now in many of the Muslim countries. What is even worse than that is what some Muslims do by travelling to the kaafir countries for the express purpose of attending these festivals and joining in the celebrations, whether the motive is to fulfil their physical desires or in response to the invitation of some of the kuffaar – as some Muslims do who live in kaafir countries and are invited to join the celebrations, or some other who have capital to invest or are owners of large companies, so they accept these invitations for the sake of being friendly to the person who invited them, or for a worldly interest such as winning a contract, and so on. All of this is haraam, and there is the fear that it may lead to kufr, because of the hadeeth, “Whoever imitates a people is one of them.” And the one who does this is aiming to join in some of the rituals of their religion.

2. Beinging the celebration to the Muslim countries. Those who attend the festivals of the kuffaar in their countries and who like them because they are ignorant and have weak faith and little knowledge, may be prompted to bring some of those festivals and rituals to the Muslim countries, as is happening now in many Muslim countries, where the Gregorian New year is celebrated. This category is worse than the former one for one reason, which is that the people whodo this are not content merely to join the kuffaar in their rituals, but they want to bring them to the Muslim lands as well.

Secondly:

Festivals whose origins lie in the rituals of the kuffaar, and they have now become international customs and celebrations. This is like the Olympic festivals (the Olympiad) in Greece, which nowadays appears to be no more than an international sporting event in which participation takes two forms:

1. Taking part in the games with their rituals in the kaafir countries, as many of the Muslim states do by sending athletes to participate in the different games.

2. Bringing these festivals to the Muslim countries, such as some of the Muslim countries asking to host the Olympic Games in their countries.

In both cases, taking part or hosting the games in a Muslim country is haraam, for the following reasons:

1. The origin of these Olympic Games is one of the pagan festivals of the Greeks, as mentioned above. This was the most important festival for the Greek nation, then it was inherited by the Romans and, in turn, the Christians.

2. It bears the same name as it was known by when it was a Greek festival.

The fact that it is now no more than a sporting event does not cancel out the fact that it is a pagan festival, because of its origin and name. The evidence (daleel) for that is the hadeeth narrated by Thaabit ibn al-Dahhaak (may Allaah be pleased with him), who said: “At the time of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), a man vowed to sacrifice some camels in Bawwaanah. He came to the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon

him) and said, 'I have vowed to sacrifice some camels in Bawwaanah.' The Prophet Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said, 'Were there any idols there that were worshipped during the Jaahiliyyah?' He said, 'No.' He said, 'Did they hold any of their festivals there?' He said, 'No.' The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: 'Then fulfil your vow, for there is no fulfilment of any vow which involves disobeying Allaah, or with regard to something that the son of Adam does not own.'" (Narrated by Abu Dawood in al-Aymaan wa'l-Nudhoor, 3133. According to another report, the one who asked the question was a woman (2133). It was also narrated by al-tabaraani in al-Kabeer (1431). Shaykh al-Islam said: its isnaad is according to the conditions of al-Saheehayn. All of its narrators are thiqaat (trustworthy) and mashhoor (well known), and the chain is intact, with no 'an'anah (none of the links of the chain are connected with the word 'an, meaning 'from'). See al-Iqtidaa', 1/634. It was classed as saheeh by al-Haafiz in al-Buloogh, 5041).

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) paid attention to the origins of things, and the origin of this sporting event is a (pagan) festival.

Shaykh al-Islam said: "This implies that the fact that that spot was the place where their festival was held would have been a reason to forbid him to sacrifice there, as would also have been the case if had been the place of their idols. Otherwise, how else can we interpret the hadeeth, of course it would only have been to venerate the spot which the yvenerated, by holding the festival there os by joining them in there celebrations there, or reviving the symbols of their festival and other things that can only be related to that action in that place or at that time… If merely choosing the place of the festival is forbidden, then how about the festival itself?" (al-Iqtidaa', 1/344)

Our issue concerning the Olympic games does not have to do with the time or the place, but with the event itself and its original name, and the things that are done during the event, such as the lighting of the Olympic torch, which is one of the rituals of the games. There is also the timing of the event, because among the Greeks the games were held every four years, and nowadays too they are held every four years. This is a festival with regard to its origins, its name, the things that are done and the timing, so taking part in these games means taking part in a festival which was pagan and then Christian, and asking to hold these games in a Muslim country means bringing this pagan festival into a Muslim land.

Thirdly:

The days and weeks that have been invented by the kuffaar. These may be divided into two types:

1. those which have a religious origin and have now become customs connected to some worldly purpose, such as the workers' festival (May Day) which was invented by those who worshipped trees, then it became a pagan festival of the Romans, then it was adopted by the French who connected it to the church, until socialism came and propagated it, and it became an international and official holiday even in many Muslim countries. Undoubtedly it is haraam to adopt this day as a holiday and let workers take this day off, for the following reasons:

1. because in its origins and development it is a pagan festival

2. because it occurs on a fixed day each year, which is May 1.

3. Because it involves imitating the kuffaar with regard to something that belongs exclusively tot hem.

1. Even if an event does not have a religious basis, such as World health Day, or days for fighting drugs and eradicating illiteracy, and other invented days and weeks, one of the two following things will still apply:

1. either it occurs on a fixed day each year and is repeated on the same day each year, like Bank Holidays and other fixed days. There are two things wrong with this:

    1. it is a fixed day which recurs on the same date each year

    2. it entails imitating the kuffaar because this is something that they have invented.

These international days, such as World Health Day and a day for fighting drugs, contain some benefit for humanity as a whole, which the Muslims cannot avoid taking part in because they may miss out on some benefits otherwise; they have nothing to do with religion and only resemble festivals in that they come every year and they are events that are celebrated and taken notice of – so can they be tolerated on these grounds? It seems to me that this matter needs research and ijtihaad to weigh up the pros and cons, because the Muslims are not consulted concerning these days and their opinion carries no weight, on the contrary, these things are forced on the

entire world and the Muslins are in a weak and humilated position as is well known.

1. or it is not a day or week that comes at a fixed time each year, but is moved according to a particular system or needs. This does not have the character of a festival which is repeated at a fixed time, but there remains the problem of imitation, in that it is something that was invented by the kuffaar and them brought to the Muslims. Does this count as the kind of imitation that is haraam? Or is it a kind of imitation that is permissible like other matters having to do with organization, administration, etc., and like the days of annual leave in companies, institutions, etc.? This too needs research and investigation, although initially to seems to me that there is nothing wrong with it, for the following reasons:

    1. It is not fixed on a specific date that is the same each time, so it does not have that festival-like character.

    2. These days are not called festivals, and they do not have the characteristics of festivals, such as celebrations and the like.

    3. The purpose of these days is to organize awareness campaigns, to achieve beneficial goals.

    4. Those who want to stop them would have to stop many events and gatherings that happen from time to time, and I do not think that anyone would advocate this. These events are like family meetings, da'wah meetings, workplace meetings, and so on.

    5. There is nothing in them that would dictate that they be considered haraam, apart from the fact that they originated with the kuffaar and were brought to the Muslims, and the problems they deal with are widespread among the kuffaar and others. So the objection that they belong only to the kuffaar is cancelled by the fact that these things are also widespread among the Muslims.

In conclusion, These festivals are not part of the religion and beliefs of the kuffaar, and they do not form part of their exclusive customs and traditions. There is no veneration or celebration involved, and they are not festivals on set days which are repeated regularly. They resemble other organizations in that they serve a useful purpose.

Fourthly:

Another form of imitation of the kuffaar is turning the Eids of the Muslims into something resembling the festivals of the kuffaar. The Eids of the Muslims are distinguished by the fact that their rituals point to the expression of gratitude to Allaah, may He be exalted, and glorifying, praising and worshipping Him, whilst expressing joy for the blessings of Allaah, and not using these blessings for sinful purposes. This is in contrast to the festivals of the kuffaar, which are distinguished by the veneration of their false rituals and idols which they worship instead of Allaah, whikst indulging in their fobidden desires. It is most unfortunate that Muslims in many places are imitating the kuffaar in this way, and they have changed their Eid from an occasion of worship and thanksgiving into an occasion on sin and ingratitude for the blessings, by spending the night of Eid listening to musical instruments and singing, indulging in immoral actions, organizing mixed parties and doing other things which they think express the celebration of Eid, following the misguided ways in which the kuffaar spend their festivals engaging in immorality and sin.

Ways in which we must avoid the festivals of the kuffaar

1. Avoid attending them:

The scholars have agreed that it is haraam to attend the festivals of the kuffaar and to imitate them in their festivals. This is the madhhab of the Hanafis, Maalikis, Shaafa'is and Hanbalis. (See al-Iqtidaa', 2/425; Ahkaam Ahl al-Dhimmah by Ibn al-Qayyim, 2/227-527; al-Tashabbuh al-Munhaa 'anhu fi'l-Fiqh al-Islaami, 533). There is a great deal of evidence (daleel) for this, such as:

1. All of the evidence which states that it is forbidden to imitate them, some of which has been quoted above.

2. The concensus of the Sahaabah and Taabi'een that Muslims should not attend their festivals, The evidence of this consensus takes for forms:

1. The Jews, Christians and Magians (Zoroastrians) who lived in the Muslim lands and paid Jizyah were still observing their own festivals, so the motive for some Muslims to imitate them was present. No one among the early generations of Muslims would have refrained from joining them in any part of that, If there had not been something to stop them from doing so, such as it being

either makrooh (disliked) or prohibited, many of them would have fallen into that, for if the action and the motive are present and there is nothing to stop them, people will undoubtedly do the thing. Al-muqtada? Therefore we understand that there was something stopping them from doing that, and what was stopping them was the religion of Islam. This is what was stopping them from going along with the kuffaar and this is the point that we are trying to make here. (al-Iqtidaa', 1/454).

2. The conditions set out by 'Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him), which the Sahaabah and all the fuqahaa' after them agreed upon, that the Ahl al-Dhimmah (Jews and Christians living under the protection of Islamic rule in return for paying a poll tax) should not celebrate their festivals openly in the Muslim lands. If the Muslims have agreed that they should not celebrate their festivals openly, then how can it be OK for Muslims to celebrate them? Is it not worse for a Muslim to do this at all than for a kaafir to do it openly? (al-Iqtidaa', 1/454).

1. 'Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: "Do not learn the language of the Persians, and do not enter upon the mushrikeen in their churches on the day of their festival, for the Divine warth is descending upon them." (Musannaf 'Abd al-razzaaq, 9061; al-Sunan al-Kubra by al-Bayhaqi, 9/432).

2. 'Abd-Allaah ibn 'Amr (may Allaah be pleased with them both) said: "Whoever settles in the land of the non-Arabs and celebratest heir Nawrooz and their Mahrajaan, and imitates them until he dies in that state, will be gathered with them on the Day of Resurrection." (al-Sunan al-Kubra, 9/432; classed as saheeh by Ibn Taymiyah in al-Iqtidaa', 1/754).

Shaykh al-Islam said: Here we see 'Umar forbidding people to learn their language and to merely enter their chuch on the festivals, so what about actually doing some of the things they do, or doing some of the rituals of their religion? Is not doing the things they do more serious than speaking the same language? Or is not doing some of the things they do in the festival more serious than merely entering upon them on the occasion of their festival? If the Divine wrath comes upon them on the day of their festival because of what they do, then is not the one who joins them in all or part of that also exposed to the same punishment? (al-Iqtidaa', 1/854)

And he commented on the words of 'Abd-Allaah ibn 'Amr – "will be gathered with them" by saying: This implies that this makes him a

kaafir by his joining in what they do, or else it means that this is one of the major sins that doom a person to Hell, although the former is more apparent from the wording. (1/954).

1. Avoiding doing the same things that they do.

   Some Muslims may not be able to be present at the festivals of the kuffaar, but they do the same things as they do. This is also a part of the imitation which blameworthy and forbidden. Shaykh al-Islam said: "It is not permissible for the Muslims to imitate them in any part of the things that are exclusively part of their festivals, whether it be food, dress, bathing, lighting fires or changing their habits with regard to daily living, acts of worship, etc. It is not permissible to give a feast or give gifts or sell items that will help them to do that for that purpose, or to allow children and others to do any of that, whether it is playing, wearing new clothes etc. in conclusion, they should not make that day special by adopting any of their rituals; for the Muslims, the day of the kaafirs' festival should be like any other day." Majmoo' al-Fataawaa, 52/923).

   Al-Dhahabi said: "If the Christians or the Jews have a fstival that is exxclusively theirs, the Muslims should not join them in that, just as they do not join them in their laws or their direction of prayer." (tashabbuh al-Khasess bi Ahl al-Khmaees, in al-Hikmah magazine, issue $, p. 391). Ibn al-Turkmaani al-Hanafi mentioned some of the things that some Muslims did on the occasion of Christian festivals, such as spending more than usual and taking the family out, then he said: "Some of the Hanafi scholars said: whoever does any of the things mentioned here and does not repent, is a kaafir like them." One of the companions of Maalik said: "Whoever cuts up a watermelon on the day of Nawrooz, it is as if he sacrificed a pig." (al-Lam' fi'l-Hawaadith wa'l-Bida', 1/492)

2. Avoiding using the means of transportation that they use to go to their festivals

   Maalik said: "It is makrooh to travel with them in the boats which they use to go to their festivals, because the Divine wrath and curse is descending upon them." (al-Hawaadith wa'l-Bida', 1/492).

   Ibn al-Qaasim was asked about travelling in the boats which the Christians ride in to attend their festivals. He regarded that as

makrooh, fearing the descent of Divine wrath upon them for the shirk which they agreed upon. (al-Iqtidaa', 2/625).

3. Not giving them gifts or helping them to celebrate their festvials by either selling or buying.

   Abu Hafs al-Hanafi said: "Whoever gives an egg to a kaafir out of respect for that day has disbelieved in Allaah, may He be exalted." (Fath al-Baari li Ibn Hajar al-'Asqallaani, 2/315).

   Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah said: "Ibn al-Qaasim regarded it as makrooh for a Muslim to give a Christian anything on the occasion of his festival to congratulate him. He saw that as respecting their festival and helping them in their kufr. Do you not see that it is not permissible for the Muslims to sell anything to the Christians that helps them to celebrate their festival? No meat, no food, no dress. They should not loan their riding-beasts to them or help them in any way with their festival, because that is like honouring their shirk and helping them with their kufr. The authorities should prevent Muslims from doing this. This is the view of Maalik and others, and I do not know of any dissenting opinion on this point." (2/625-725)

   Ibn al-Turkmaani said: "The Muslim is sinning if he sits with them or helps them to slaughter animals or cook food, or he lends them a riding-beast to take them to their celebrations or festivals." (al-Lama' fi'l-Hawaadith, 1/492)

4. Not helping the Muslim who wants to imitate them in their festivals to do so

   Shaykh al-Islam said: "Just as we should not imitate them in their festivals, so too we should not help the Muslim who wants to imitate them to do so. It is forbidden to so this. If a person issues an invitation on the occasion of their festivals that he would not ordinarily do, his invitation should not be accepted. If a Muslim gives a gift on this occasion that he would not ordinarily give at any other time, his gift should not be accepted, especially if it is something that would help a person to imitate them, as we have already stated. A Muslim should not sell anything that could help Muslims to imitate them in their celebrations, such as food, clothing and so on, because be doing so he is helping them in sin. (al-Iqtidaa', 2/915-025).

5. Not congratulating them on the occasion of their festivals

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: “As for congratulating them for the symbols of kufr that belong exclusively to them, this is haraam according to scholarly consensus, such as congratulating them for their festivals and fasts, and saying, ‘A blessed festival to you’ and the like. Even though the person who says this might not become a kaafir by saying this, it is still forbidden, and it is the same as congratulating them for prostrating to the cross. Indeed, it is an even greater sin with Allaah and is more hated by Him than congratulating them for drinking wine, killing people and committing adultery, and so on. Many of those who do not care about religion do this, and do not realize how abhorrent their actions are. Whoever congratulates a person for his sin, bid’ah (innovation) or kufr exposes himself to the wrath and anger of Allaah. The pious scholars used to avoid congratulating the tyrants when they were appointed to official positions, or congratulating the ignorant when they were appointed as Qaadis, teachers or Muftis, because they sought to avoid the wrath and anger of Allaah .” (Ahkaam Ahl al-Dhimmah, 1/144-244).

Congratulating the kuffaar on the occasion of their religious festivals is haraam as Ibn al-Qayyim stated, because this implies approval of their rituals and beliefs of kufr. Even if a person does not accept this kufr for himself, it is still haraam for a Muslim to approve of the rituals of kufr for someone else or to congratulate someone else for them, because Allaah does not approve of this. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“If you disbelieve, then verily, Allaah is not in need of you; He likes not disbelief for His slaves. And if you are grateful (by being believers), He is pleased therewith for you” [al-Zumar 39:7]

“This day, I have perfected your religion for you, completed My Favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion” [al-Maa’idah 5:3]

Congratulating them for that is haraam, whether they are taking part with them in that or not. If they congratulate us on the occasion of their festival, we should not respond, because it is not our festival and because these are festivals with which Allaah is not pleased, because they are either innovated in their religions, or they are prescribed, but they (their religions) have been abrogated by the religion of islam, with which Allaah sent

Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) to all of mankind. And Allaah says concerning islam (interpretation of the meaning):

"And whoever seeks a religion other than Islâm, it will never be accepted of him, and in the Hereafter he will be one of the losers" [Aal 'Imraan 3:85].

It is haraam for a Muslim to accept an invitation on these occasions, because this is worse than merely congraulating them, since it involves joining in with them. Anyone who does any of these things is a sinner whether he does it just to be friendly, or because he likes them, or because he is too shy to do otherwise, or for any other reason, because it is a kind of hypocrisy in the religion of Allaah and is a way of making the kuffaar feel stronger and making tem proud of their religion. (Majmoo' Fataawaa wa rasaa'il Fadeelat al-Shaykh Muhammad al-'Uthaymeen, compiled by Fahd al-Salmaan, 3/45-46)

Question: What if a Muslim wants to celebrate like they do, but he does it a few days before or after their festival so that he is not imitating them?

This is a kind of imitation and to is haraam, because the prohibition of a thing , and the prohibition of celebrating their festivals also covers the days before and after the festival itself, when they do things that have to do with it. The prohibition also covers the places in which they do things that have to do with their festivals or … . The ruling on these things is the same as the ruling on the festival itself. These things should not be done, even if some people avoid doing any of thse things on the days of their festival such as the Thursday (what is referred to here is Maundy Thursday or the Day of Ascension, which is one of the rituals of Easter for the Christians, who call it the Great Thursday) or Christmas, but they tell their families, I will do this for you next week or next month, and their motive is the fact that the kaafirs' festival is happening, otherwise they would not have done it at all. This is also one of the things meant by imitation. (See: al-Iqtidaa', 2/315).

6. Avoiding using their words and religious terminology

If it is forbidden to learn their languages unnecessarily for fear of resembling them, then using the names they give to their festivals and rituals is even more forbidden. This is like using

the word “mahrajaan” (festival) to describe any large gathering, because this is the name of a religious festival of the Persians.

Al-Bayhaqi narrated that ‘Ali (may Allaah be pleased with him) was given a gift for Nawrooz and he said, What is this?” They said, “O Ameer al-Mu’mineen, this is the day of Nawrooz.” He said, “Then make every day Fayrooz!” Abu Usaamah said: “He, may Allaah be pleased with him, did not even want to say ‘Nawrooz.’” (Reported by al-Bayhaqi in al-Sunan al-Kubraa, 9/532).

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah said: “ ‘Ali (may Allaah be pleased with him) did not even want to say the same name as they gave to their own festival, so how abut doing the same things?” (See: al-Iqtidaa’, 1/954).

We have already stated that this is not an Arabic term; the Arabic language is rich enough not to need such words, and has better words that can be used.

The ruling on accepting gifts on their festivals:

We have already stated above that it is not permissive to give gifts on their festivals because this is helping them in their falsehood. It is also not permissible to accept a gift from a Muslim who is imitating them, because by accepting it one is helping him to imitate them and this implies that one approves of what he is doing and that one is not rebuking him for doing this haraam action.

With regard to accepting a gift from a kaafir if he gives something to a Muslim at the time of the kaafir’s festival, this is like being given a gift at other times, because it does not involve helping them in their kufr. There is some difference of opinion with regard to this matter, based on whether one should accept a gift from a kaafir who is at war with the Muslims as opposed to a kaafir who is living under the protection of Islamic rule.

It should also be noted that their gifts may be of two types:

1. Gifts other than meat that has been slaughtered for the occasion of their festival – such as sweets, fruits and so on. There is a difference of opinion based on the question of accepting gifts from the kaafirs in general. It seems that it is permissible because it was reported that ‘Ali (may Allaah be

pleased with him) accepted their gifts, and it was reported that a woman asked ‘Aa’ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her), “We have some birds [?][from the Magians wgich they had during their festival and they gave them to us.” She said, “If they were slaughtered for that occasion, do not eat them, but eat from their trees [i.e. fruits etc.].” (Reported by Ibn Abi Shaybah in Kitaab al-At’imah in his Musannaf, 5/521, no. 16342. In al-Iqtidaa’ it says ‘We have some wet-nurses.’ The editor of al-Iqtidaa’ said: perhaps what is meant by this is relatives through radaa’ah (breastfeeding)).

Abu Barzah (may Allaah be pleased with him) said that he had Magian tenants [?] who used to give him gifts on Nawrooz and mahrajaan, and he used totell his family: ‘If it is, eat it, but if it is anything else, reject it.’ (ibid., no. 26346).

Shaykh al-Islam said: “All of this indicates that refusing to accept their gifts has no effect on their festival. The ruling on accepting their gifts at the time of their festival and at other times is the same, because this does not entail helping them in the rituals of their kufr.” (al-Iqtidaa’, 2/455-555).

2. Or their gift may be of meat that was slaughtered for the occasion of their festival. This should not be eaten, because of the reports of ‘Aaishah and Abu Barzah narrated above, and because it has been slaughtered according to the rituals of kufr.

7. Singling out the festivals of the kuffaar for fasting so as to be different from them

The scholars differed with regard to this:

1. It was said that it is not makrooh to fast on their festivals for the purpose of being different from them. This view is da’eef (weak).

2. The correct view is that it is not permissible to single out the days of their festivals for fasting, because their festivals are occasions which they venerate, and fasting on these days and not others coincides with them in their veneration.

Ibn Qudaamah (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: “Our companions said: it is makrooh to single out the day of Nawrooz and the day of Mahrajaan to fast, because these are two days which are venerated by the kuffaarm so fasting only on these days and not on

others is agreeing with them in their veneration of those days. This is like the case of Saturday, so by analogy this ruling applies to every festival of the kuffaar and every day which they venerate.” (al-Mughni, 4/924; see also al-Iqtidaa’, 2/975).

This ruling applies in cases where one singles out that day to fast because it is their festival. But if it happens to coincide with a vow or a voluntary fast, without intending to fast because it is their festival, then there is nothing wrong with that.” (See Haashiyat Ibn Qaasim ‘ala al-Rawd al-Murabba’, 3/064). The guideline in being different from them with regard to their festivals is that one should not innovate anything at all; one should treat the days of their festivals as being like any other day. (See al-Iqtidaa’, 2/815). So one should not take the day off work, or rejoice on that occasion, of single that day out for fasting, expressing grief, etc.

Shaykh al-Islam mentioned something which may be taken as guidelines with regard to the matter of imitation. He said: “tashabbuh (imitation) includes those who do something because they do it, which is rare; and those who follow others inwhat they do for some purpose of his own even though the action is originally taken from those others. As for the one who does something that happens to be done by others as well, but neither of them took it from the other, it is open to debate as to whether this is is imitation or not. But the person who does this may be rebuked so that there will be no excuse for imitation, and because this will reinforce the idea of differing from them.” (al-Iqtidaa’, 1/242).

On the basis of what Shaykh al-Islam has said, actions that happen to coincide with what they do may be divided into two types:

1. Imitation of them, which is where the person who imitates them wants to be like them ,for whatever reason. This is haraam.

2. Resembling them, which is when a person is not deliberately aiming to be like them. In this case it should be pointed out to him, then if he stops, all well and good; otherwise he is guilty of the kind of imitation that is haraam. ‘Abd-Allaah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Aas (may Allaah be pleased with them both) said: “The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) saw me wearing two garments that had been dyed with safflower. He said, ‘This is the clothing of the kuffaar, do not wear them.’” According to another rport: “He said, ‘Did you mother tell you to wear this?’ I said, ‘Should I wash them?’ He said, ‘No, burn them.’” (The two reports were narrated by

Muslim in al-Libaas wa'l-Zeenah, 2077)

Al-Qurtubi said: "This indicates that the reason he told him not to wear them was that by wearing them he was imitating the kuffaar." (book title?? 5/399).

It seems from the hadeeth that 'Abd-Allaah (may Allaah be pleased with him) did not realize that he was imitating the dress of the kuffaar, but the Prophet (peace be upon him) still told him off for that and explained the ruling of sharee'ah on this matter.

If something originated with the kuffaar, And it is done by them and by others, then this is not imitation, but Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah thought that it should be stopped so as to leave no room for excuses and so as to protect the Muslims from falling into imitation of the kuffaar, and because this serves the purpose of differing from them.

The munaafiqoon and the festivals of the kuffaar

1. The socialist Baath party in one of the Arab countries tried to abolish Udhiyah (sacrifices for 'Eid al-Adhaa) on the grounds of famine and drought. Their supporters put up a huge banner on which was written: "For the sake of the hungry and the poor and the naked, donate the value of the sheep for udhiyah." (See al-Istijaabah magazine, vol. 4, Rabee' al-Thaani 1406 AH).

Eid al-Adhaa came and went, and the Muslims in that country offered their sacrifices. Then when Christmas and New Year approached, preparaions began to celebrate them. When Christmas and New year came, they were official holidays in that country, and there were lavish parties and promiscuous soirees. Foremost among the people celebrating were the leaders of the scoialist Baath party whose joy at the Christian festivals made them forget the needs of the poor, hungry and naked, whose plight they only remembered at the time of the Muslims' Eids!

2. One of them wrote in his weekly column, under the title of "Tolerance" (see 'Ukaaz newspaper, 28/8/1418, 5/9/1418, 12/9/1418 AH) words that indicate the sickness in his heart and the weakness of his religion. The tolerance to which he referred was with regard to the Christian festivals of Christmas and New year. Among the things that this pseudo-faqeeh said was: "This human brotherhood includes all of mankind, and there is no division and enmity except when there is fighting and when the Muslims are opposed by another group – then

there will be fighting, enmity and legitimate self-defence, despite the fact that some extremists and terrorist groups are trying to extinguish this light by spreading interpretations and ideas whiich encourage hatred and boycotting the world. So they make noise of occasions which are celebrated by the entire world and consider congratulating others to be a deviation from Islam. But in fact, I tell you, these occasions spread love, not hatred, and bring people together, not divide them.” The author went on, in his compliant and defeatist series on tolerance, which went on for three issues, to cover the Christians festivals for which his heart overflowed with love. In his second article, he said: “Its origin is kindness, i.e., tolerance and justice. As for enmity, it is directed towards those who have declared hostility against us. The matter of difference of religion is something which will be up to the justice and mercy of Allaah on the Day of Judgement.